



# **Adult Education and Literacy**

## **Data Quality Standards**

**Missouri Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education**

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## Section I. Introduction

The Missouri Adult Education and Literacy program is directly affected by federal legislation known as the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Workforce Investment Act includes Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act which mandates continuous improvement with regard to three core indicators of program effectiveness: (1) participants' educational gain; (2) participants' outcomes of gaining and retaining employment, and entering into, and retention in, post-secondary education or training; and (3) participants' acquisition of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. All states are required to set performance standards (benchmarks for performance), and states' program effectiveness will be judged in part by whether the standards are met.

Section 515 of the United States Public Law 106-554, Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001, directed the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to issue government-wide guidelines that "provide policy and procedural guidance to Federal agencies for ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information (including statistical information) disseminated by Federal agencies." Information includes any communication or representation of knowledge, such as facts or data, in any medium or form (textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual forms).

In response to the OMB mandate, the U. S. Department of Education developed and disseminated a document titled *U. S. Department of Education Information Quality Guidelines* that outlines its policies and procedures for reviewing and substantiating the quality of information and data it disseminates. The U. S. Department of Education requires that states maximize the quality of information and data related to Adult Education and Literacy program performance.

Information and data quality is important to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Adult Education and Literacy (hereinafter referred to as "the Department") and Missouri Adult Education and Literacy service providers (hereinafter referred to as "Missouri AEL service providers) because:

- The Department must report financial data, statistical data, and other information describing the educational achievement, goal attainment, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, and employment outcomes of Missouri Adult Education and Literacy participants to the U. S. Department of Education.
- High quality information is required to demonstrate evidence of effective program service delivery.
- Educators, researchers, policymakers, and the public use information and data that the Department disseminates for a variety of purposes. Thus, it is important that the information the Department disseminates is accurate and reliable.

- The Department relies on high quality information and data to make sound decisions in the administration of its grant programs.

All Missouri AEL Service Providers are required to collect and report selected adult participant information and data to: (1) guide Missouri AEL service providers in program management and improvement activities, (2) guide professional development planning and implementation at both local and state levels, (3) facilitate efficient and effective management of statewide Adult Education and Literacy resources, and (4) satisfy accountability requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS).

The purpose of this document is to guide the Department and Missouri AEL service provider personnel in the process of collecting and disseminating information and data. This document relies heavily on information and documents disseminated by the U.S. Department of Education.

Although this document contains a section specifically titled *Missouri Adult Education and Literacy Assessment Policy*, the Department and Missouri AEL service providers will consider this document in its entirety as policy related to information and data collection and dissemination.

## Section II. The National Reporting System

The U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, and a consortium of State Directors of Adult Education designed the National Reporting System (NRS) as a medium for states to report annual performance information and data. The NRS was formally adopted in 1997 to satisfy a mandate of the 1993 Government Performance and Review Act (GPRA) that all states document and demonstrate program performance. The voluntary nature of the NRS changed in 1998 when Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, of the Workforce Investment Act established accountability requirements.

Those accountability requirements included a mandate that states develop outcome-based performance standards for adult education programs. The NRS established measures and methods that meet requirements of the Workforce Investment Act.

### NRS Measures

National Reporting System standards require that states collect and report specific information and data, called *measures*, for the *Annual Statistical Performance Report*. The NRS measures include *core* and *secondary* measures. Core measures apply to *all* Adult Education and Literacy participants who attend classes for 12 hours or more. States must develop standards for participants' performance and negotiate those standards for core outcome measures with the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education may award incentive grants to those states that meet or exceed those agreed-upon performance standards. Missouri AEL service providers that meet or exceed performance standards may receive a share of those incentives. Missouri AEL service providers may also receive *annual performance funding* for participants' achievement of higher educational functional levels and GED achievement. Core measures include:

- *Outcome measures* – These measures are participants' educational gain, entering into and retention in employment, receipt of secondary school diploma or GED certificate, and placement in post-secondary education or training.
- *Descriptive measures* – These measures are participants' demographics, reasons for attendance, and student status.
- *Participation measures* – These measures are measurement of contact hours and participation in instructional programs for special populations, such as workplace literacy and family literacy.

The NRS standards also include *optional secondary measures* that are related to employment, family and community. States may deem these measures important to understanding and evaluating Adult Education and Literacy programs. However, these secondary measures will not be used as a basis for incentive grant awards to states.

## Outcome Measures

*Core Outcome Measure #1: Educational Gain* – Learner completes or advances one or more educational functioning levels from assessed level at initial entry into the program. The following table presents entry-level descriptors for the educational functioning levels.

Outcome Measure Definitions		
Core Outcome Measure # 1		
Educational Functioning Levels – Adult Basic Education (ABE)		
Level	Level Descriptor	Functional & Workplace Skills
I	Beginning ABE Literacy *(TABE : 0.0–1.9 Grade Equivalent)	Learner has little or no ability to read basic signs and maps; has little or no written communication or computational skills; can handle routine entry-level jobs.
II	Beginning Basic Education *(TABE : 0.0–3.9 Grade Equivalent)	Learner reads simple instructions, signs, and maps. Completes simple forms; handles basic entry-level tasks; has minimal computer and technology skills.
III	Low Intermediate Basic Education *(TABE : 4.0–5.9 Grade Equivalent)	Learner can complete job applications, written orders, and medical forms; reads simple charts and graphs; performs routine computer and technology tasks; writes short reports and essays.
IV	High Intermediate Basic Education *(TABE : 6.0–8.9 Grade Equivalent)	Learner translates graphs, charts, and multi-step diagrams; reads procedural documents and repair manuals; uses most basic computer software.
Educational Functioning Levels – Adult Secondary Education (ASE)		
V	Low Adult Secondary Education *(TABE : 9.0–10.9 Grade Equivalent) Te	Learner follows multi-step directions; reads common legal forms and complex manuals; interprets and integrates information from several sources; is proficient with computer and technology operations.
VI	High Adult Secondary Education *(TABE 11.0–12.9 Grade Equivalent)	Learner reads complex technical information and comprehends some college level textbooks and apprentice manuals; can function in job situations requiring higher order thinking processes; adapts computer software and technology to new situations.

\* TABE = Tests of Adult Basic Education

<b>Core Outcome Measure # 1 Continued</b>		
<b>Educational Functioning Levels – English-As-A-Second Language (ESL)</b>		
I	Beginning ESL Literacy *(CASAS: 180 and below)	Learner functions minimally in English; communicates only by gestures and isolated words. Recognizes only simple signs and logos; handles only entry-level jobs requiring no reading or communication; has no computer or technology skills.
II	Beginning ESL *(CASAS: 181–200)	Learner functions with difficulty in situations related to needs and social situations; uses simple and learned phrases; completes simple forms requiring personal information; handles routine entry-level jobs requiring basic and oral communication where tasks can be demonstrated; has minimal knowledge and experience with computers and technology.
III	Low Intermediate ESL *(CASAS: 201–210)	Learner reads and interprets simple instructions, signs and maps; completes simple forms, but needs support with complex forms; handles entry-level jobs that require some written and oral communication; uses simple computer software; performs sequences of routine computer tasks with support.
IV	High Intermediate ESL *(CASAS: 211–220)	Learner has basic survival and social skills; follows simple oral and written instructions; communicates on the telephone and writes simple messages and notes related to basic needs; completes simple medical and job applications; handles jobs involving oral and written instructions for tasks that can be clarified orally; uses or can learn simple computer software and technology.
V	Low Advanced ESL *(CASAS: 221–235)	Learner functions independently for most survival needs; interprets simple charts and graphs; handles jobs that involve multi-level instructions and tasks and public interaction; uses all basic computer software; selects appropriate technology.
VI	High Advanced ESL *(CASAS: 236–245)	Learner uses English in routine work and social situations; interprets charts and graphs; uses the telephone; understands radio and television; handles jobs requiring reading and writing; selects and uses appropriate computer software and technology.

\* CASAS = Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System

<b>Outcome Measure Definitions Continued</b>	
<b>Core Outcome Measure # 2</b> Entered Employment	Learner obtains a job by the end of the first quarter after the program exit quarter (For learners who are not employed at time of entry and who have a primary or secondary goal of obtaining employment).
<b>Core Outcome Measure # 3</b> Retained Employment	Learner is still employed in the third quarter after program exit.
<b>Core Outcome Measure # 4</b> Receipt of a Secondary School Diploma or GED	Learner obtains certification of passing scores on the General Educational Development (GED) tests, or obtains a high school or adult high school diploma (For learners who establish a primary or secondary goal of obtaining the GED certificate or a secondary school diploma and exit during the program year).
<b>Core Outcome Measure # 5</b> Placement in Post-secondary Education or Training	Learner enrolls in a post-secondary educational or occupational skills training program that does not duplicate other services or training received, regardless of whether the prior services or training were completed (For learners with a goal of placement in post-secondary education or training).

### Section III. Dictionary of Terms and Definitions

## **NRS Demographic Measures**

*Ethnicity* – Learner’s ethnic category to which the learner self-identifies, appears to belong to, or is regarded in the community as belonging. The ethnic categories are:

*American Indian or Alaskan Native* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

*Asian* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent. These areas include, for example, China, India, India, Japan, and Korea.

*Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander* – A person having origins as a native of the Hawaiian Islands or the other islands of the Pacific, such as the Philippine Islands and Samoa.

*Black or African American* – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa, but not of Hispanic culture or origin.

*Hispanic or Latino* – A person having origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central or South America, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

*White* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East, but not of Hispanic culture or origin.

*Gender* - Whether the learner is male or female.

*Age* – Learner’s date of birth (from *NRS Implementation Guidelines*, March 2001)

## **NRS Student-Status Measures**

*Employed Adult* – Learners who work as paid employees, work in their own business or firm, or who work 15 hours or more per week as unpaid workers on a farm or in a business operated by a member of the family. Also included are learners who are not currently working, but who have jobs or businesses from which they are temporarily absent.

*Unemployed Adult* – Learners who are not working, but who are seeking employment, have made specific efforts to find a job and are available for work.

*Not in the labor force* – Learners who are not employed and who are not seeking employment.



*On Public Assistance* – Learner is receiving financial assistance from Federal, State, or local government agencies, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, refugee cash assistance, old-age assistance, general assistance and aid to the blind or totally disabled. Social Security benefits, unemployment insurance and employment-funded disability are not included under this definition.

*Disabled Adult* – A learner who has a record of, or is regarded as having any type of mental or physical impairment that substantially limits or restricts one or more major life activities including walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, working, and learning.

*Rural Area* – A place with a population less than 2,500 and outside an urbanized area.

*Urbanized Area* – An area that includes a population of 50,000 or more in a city and adjacent areas of high density.

*Low Income* – The learner (1) receives, or is a member of a family, that received a total family income, in the six months prior to enrollment, of 70 percent of the income level standard for a family of that size; or (2) the learner is receiving or is a member of a family that is receiving cash assistance payments from Federal or state agencies or Food Stamps; or (3) the learner can be designated as homeless under the McKinney Act.

*Dislocated Worker* – A learner who received an individual notice of pending or actual layoff from a job, or an individual who received a publicly announced notice of pending or actual layoff.

*Single Parent* – A learner who has sole custodial support of one or more dependent children.

*Retired* – A learner who has reached the normal retirement age (62 and above), is retired from full-time employment, is receiving retirement benefits based on full-time employment, and is not working for wages more than 20 hours per week

*Displaced Homemaker* – A learner who has worked principally in the home providing unpaid services for family members and who: (1) is not gainfully employed, (2) has had, or will have difficulty finding appropriate employment, (3) has been dependent on, and is no longer supported by, the income of another family member, (4) has been dependent on, and no longer is supported by, government assistance, or (5) is supported as the parent of a 16 or 17 year-old child.

*Learning Disabled Adult* – A learner with IQ in the low-average and above (70+) who has deficits, related to neurological impairments, in capacity in defined limited areas related to learning, including dyslexia (reading disability) dysgraphia (writing disability), dyscalculia (math disability), and who have a history of previous efforts.

*Homeless Adult* – A learner who lacks a fixed, regular nighttime residence or who has a residence that is: (1) a publicly supervised or privately operated shelter designed to

provide temporary living accommodations, including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill; (2) an institution that is a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (3) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. This designation does not apply to any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to an Act of Congress or a State law.

*Immigrant Adult* – A learner who is a born alien and not a citizen of the United States due to birth or naturalization.

**Primary and Secondary Goals** – A learner’s main or secondary reasons for attending the program or class (self-identified). Learners should identify only those primary or secondary goals that are practically achievable during the program year. Learners should identify one or more of the primary *and* secondary goals listed below.

*Improve Basic Skills* – A learner who may, or may not, possess a secondary or postsecondary credential, but needs to improve his/her basic reading, math, language, or technology skills.

*Obtain Employment* – Obtain full or part-time paid employment.

*Improve Employment* – Obtain a job that has increased pay or benefits, higher level of responsibility, or that requires a higher level of skill compared to current or most recent job.

*Obtain GED/H.S. Diploma* – Achieve sufficient basic skills to earn a secondary credential or pass the GED test.

*College/Training* – Achieve skills required for enrollment in a postsecondary public or private college or training program.

*English Language Skills* – Improve English language speaking, reading, and writing skills.

*Citizenship* – Obtain skills to pass the citizenship test.

*Personal Goal* – Any other goal related to instruction with a clearly definable outcome.

*Military* – Improving basic reading, math, and language skill qualify for military service.

*Family Goal* – Achieve a goal related to a family goal that is clearly identifiable.

**Program Enrollment Type Measures** - One or more of the following program types may be identified for a learner. Some types are also identified on the *Class Schedule* form. An adult learner should *always* be identified as an ESL learner or as a Basic Education or Adult Secondary Education Student. In addition, identify the program type.

*ESL Student* – A learner whose first language is a language other than English

*Basic Education or Adult Secondary Education Student* – Basic education (ABE) includes learners in Educational Functioning Levels I through IV, Grade Equivalents 0.0 – 8.9, at the time of entry. Adult Secondary Education (ASE) includes learners in Educational Functioning Levels V and VI, Grade Equivalents 9.0 – 12.9, at the time of entry.

*Family Literacy or Even Start Student* – Programs designed to serve instructional needs of both parents and at least one child.

*Workplace Literacy Student* – A participant who is enrolled in a program physically located in a workplace, with curriculum that is designed to improve learners' work-related basic skills.

### **Exit Information**

*Attendance Hours* – Total attendance hours for each class a participant attended.

*Reasons for Leaving the Program* – Each participant should identify one or more of the following reasons he/she leaves the program *before achievement of stated goals*: (1) Health problems, (2) Family problems, (3) Changed address or left area, (4) Lack of interest, (5) Instruction not helpful, (6) Child care problems, (7) Location of class was not convenient, (8) To take a job, (9) Incarcerated, (10) Transportation problems, (11) Class Schedule was not convenient, (12) Entered Military, (13) End of program year.

*Achievements* – The participant who exits the program after achievement of his/her goals should identify one or more of the following options: (1) Obtained an Adult high School Diploma, (2) Entered other educational or training program, (3) Registered to vote or voted for the first time, (4) Changed to or upgraded to a better job, (5) Achieved personal/family goal, (6) Improved basic skills, (7) Entered military, (8) Passed the GED test, (9) Received U.S. citizenship, (10) Obtained a job, (11) Removed from public assistance, (12) Acquired driver's license, (13) Became proficient using English, (14) I am now able to assist children in school, (15) Improved English skills.

*Last Date of Attendance* – The last month, day, and year the participant attended class. This date must be accurate. If the participant has not attended for 90 days, he/she should be exited from the program.

### **Other Definitions**

*ABE* – An acronym representing the term Adult Basic Education, used to identify Adult Education and Literacy instructional activities conducted for those adult learners who enter local program class sites at Educational Functioning Levels I, II, III, and IV, Grade Equivalent 0.0 – 8.9).

*ASE* – An acronym representing the term Adult Secondary Education, used to identify Adult Education and Literacy instructional activities conducted for those adult learners who enter local program class sites at Educational Functioning Levels V and VI (Grade Equivalent 9.0 – 12.9)

*Classcode* – A ten-digit identifier used to specify a particular class site, normally consisting of the county code and school district code and four-digits to identify a particular class site within the program. Community College administered AEL programs are also identified by class-codes. The Department staff will assign the basic six-digit codes for programs operated by Community Based Organizations CBO. Individual AEL service providers will assign the last four digits of the classcode to identify unique class sites or unique class characteristics.

*Contact Hour* – One hour of instruction a learner receives, or one hour of instructional activity in which a learner engages, when a certified AEL teacher is present or monitors that learner activity. Instructional activity includes any program-sponsored activity designed to promote student learning in the program curriculum such as classroom instruction, assessment, tutoring or participation in a learning lab. Participant contact hours must be in an approved class site, during approved hours of operation, with an AEL certified teacher in attendance. The physical presence of both participant and teacher must be legibly documented on an official sign-in form. Sign-in and sign-out times for participants must be legibly documented.

*Contact Hour Reimbursement Rate* – The dollar amount that each Missouri AEL service provider will be reimbursed (based on allowable expenditures) for each contact hour. Each fiscal year, the Department determines the total federal and state dollars that will be available to support instructional activities offered by Missouri AEL service providers. The Department uses the total contact hours that generated by all Missouri AEL service providers, and divides the total dollars available to support instructional activities by the contact hours to determine the contact hour reimbursement rate for the year.

*Core funding* – That portion of the Funding Formula that is derived by a three-step process as follows: (1) multiply the Contact Hour Reimbursement Rate times fifty percent (50%) times audited contact hours for the second-most recent completed program year; (2) multiply the Contact Hour Reimbursement Rate times fifty percent (50%) of the average of the contact hours for the three years previous to the second-most recently completed year; (3) sum the dollars calculated in steps 1 and 2. For example, to calculate Fiscal Year 2003 core funding for Program A that had 1000 Fiscal Year 2001 audited contact hours, 1000 Fiscal Year 2000 audited contact hours, 2000 Fiscal Year 1999 audited contact hours, and 3000 Fiscal Year 1998 audited contact hours, with the Fiscal Year 2003 Contact Hour Reimbursement Rate equal to \$2.70, perform the calculations below:

- (1)  $\$2.70 \times 50\% \times 1000 = \$1.35 \times 1000 = \$1,350.$
- (2)  $\$2.70 \times 50\% \times [(1000+2000+3000)/3] = \$1.35 \times 2000 = \$2,700.$
- (3) Fiscal Year 2003 core funding =  $\$1,350 + \$2,700 = \$4,050.$

*Community Based Organization (CBO)* – A not-for-profit organization that is financially supported by philanthropy and volunteer staff. An organization that receives a major portion of its operating funds from government sources *is not* a CBO.

*Educational Functioning Level* – The level at which an individual performs life activities such as reading for comprehension, mathematical operations, and communication through speaking and writing (See NRS Outcomes Measure # 1 Table above). *NRS Implementation Guidelines* include tables that link Educational Functioning Levels to CASAS assessment scores and TABE Grade Equivalents.

*Funding Formula* – The formula used to calculate operational funding for Missouri AEL providers. The formula is a combination of core funding, performance funding, and targeted funding such as Marketing, Technology, and Data Collection.

*GED Test* – General Educational Development test developed and authorized by the American Council on Education and administered by the state agencies.

*Grade Equivalent (G.E.)* – Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) tables convert assessment raw scores to Grade Equivalent and scale scores. The Grade Equivalent 9.6 is interpreted as 9 years and 6 months of equivalent education. The technical process of “norming” is used to determine TABE Grade Equivalent, although most of the points on the range of 0.0 to 12.9 are determined through extrapolation. Under the *best conditions*, a TABE Grade Equivalent should be considered as an estimate of a learner’s *true* skills. Grade equivalent should not be used to make comparisons among subjects, content areas, classes, etc.

*Performance Funding* – That portion of operational funding awarded to Missouri AEL service providers based on participants’ achievements such as GED attainment and student progress. Monetary awards may vary from year to year for those achievements, and additional achievements may be considered for awards from year to year. Performance funding will be paid for Educational Functioning Level improvement, GED achievement (English Version only), or other designated achievements *for those adult learners who persist in instructional activities for at least 12 hours*.

*Pretest* – An initial approved assessment used to determine a participant’s educational functioning level at entry and to help a teacher/participant develop a study plan.

*Post-test* – A second assessment administered to a participant used to determine student progress. The posttest must be a parallel form of the pretest. For example, if a TABE, Form 7, reading assessment is administered as a pretest, the TABE, Form 8, reading assessment should be administered as a posttest.

*Retained Student* – A Missouri AEL participant who persists in attendance for at least 12 or more contact hours.

*Retention* – The number of Missouri AEL service provider participants who are retained divided by the total enrolled participants. This statistic may be calculated for a class site or the entire program.

*Scale Score* – A unit of a single, equal-interval scale that is expressed as a whole number that usually ranges from 0 to 999. Scale scores can be added, subtracted, and averaged across test levels, and they *can* be used to make comparisons among classes, programs, regions, subjects, etc.

*Student Progress* – Participant progress is based on a positive difference between a pretest and a posttest, and occurs when posttest results indicate that a participant has completed the entry Educational Functioning Level or achieved a higher Educational Functioning Level.

*Social Security Number (SSN)* – The teacher should verify (driver's license or other official picture ID) the participant's SSN and name spelling. If the participant does not wish to use his/her SSN, a tracking number may be assigned using 999-XX-YYYY, where XX represents the last two digits of the three-digit K-12 school district code. The –YYYY should be assigned in numerical order. For example, the first tracking number assigned in the St. Louis City school district (115-115) would be 999-15-0001. *Missouri AEL service providers must develop a written procedure to assure that participants are identified by unique SSNs or tracking numbers.*

*Validity* – Test validity relates to whether an assessment actually measures what it is supposed to measure. There are several types of validity, but the type that should be of greatest concern to adult educators is content validity. *Content validity* of an assessment relates to whether the items in a particular assessment accurately represent the scope of the subject matter for which the assessment was designed.

## **Section IV. Missouri Adult Education and Literacy Assessment Policy**

### **Adult Participant Assessment**

All participants enrolled in Missouri Adult Education and Literacy class sites will be administered academic performance assessments to: (1) guide teachers' development of instructional plans that meet participants' needs, (2) guide participants' decisions regarding their study plans and attendance, (3) guide local Adult Education and Literacy local program management and improvement activities, (4) guide professional development planning and implementation at both local and state levels, (5) facilitate efficient and effective management of statewide Adult Education and Literacy resources, and (6) satisfy accountability requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS).

**Approved Participant Assessments** – Assessments listed below are approved for performance funding and NRS accountability reporting requirements. Other assessments may be used when necessary to serve unique participants' needs, but may not be reported via the state NRS data collection system.

- *CASAS Reading, Mathematics, Listening, and Writing* assessments.
- *Tests for Adult Basic Education (TABE)*, most recently published forms of Reading, Mathematics, and Language assessments (the most recently published TABE forms are 7 and 8).

**Unacceptable Participant Assessments** - The assessments listed below may not be reported for performance funding and NRS accountability reporting requirements (effective July 1, 2003).

- *Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT-R)*
- *The TABE Survey Test*.
- *Other standardized tests*.
- *The Official GED Practice Test*.

### **General Assessment Guidelines for Adult Education and Literacy**

When using *standardized* assessments, adherence to the following guidelines is necessary to achieve meaningful test results:

- Pretests should be administered only after participants have been oriented to the class site, feel comfortable, and are at ease with the teacher and the class site environment.
- Tests should only be administered in a noise free environment where participants will be free from interruptions and other disruptive influences.
- Participants should be tested only when they are physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared.

- The teacher, or test administrator should explain the purpose of the test and give appropriate instructions to participants who are testing.
- Although teachers may administer a full battery of tests during one attendance session, it may not be advisable to subject participants to several consecutive hours of testing.
- All assessments must be administered in compliance with instructions published by test developers. For example, Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) tests must be administered in the published times allowed, and the Locator test must be used to determine the appropriate level test that should be administered.
- When TABE 7 or TABE 8 Math tests are administered, both Mathematics Computation and Applied Mathematics subtests must be administered. If a grade equivalent is reported from a TABE table, the composite grade equivalent using both scores must be reported.
- Alternate (parallel) forms of assessments should be used for pretests and posttests. For example, a participant who is administered a Form 7 TABE Reading pretest should be administered a Form 8, TABE Reading test as a posttest. If a learner's pretest score is at the top of the range for that level, the next higher level may be used for the posttest. For example, Mr. Doe is administered a TABE Mathematics Form 7 Level M pretest. His number correct scores are as follows: Computation=20, Applied Mathematics=35. Those scores, using Table 58 of the TABE 7 & 8 Norms Book, yield a Grade Equivalent=6.7. Since the upper boundary of the M level is 6.9, it would be appropriate to use TABE 8, Level D for a posttest when Mr. Doe is ready.
- CASAS and TABE assessments are not interchangeable. When one of those assessments is used for pretests, that particular type of test will be administered a participant throughout the program year (for example, if an ESL participant is administered a pretest using CASAS, that participant should be tested using CASAS throughout the year, even though the participant advances to higher educational functioning levels).
- Class site teachers should understand that there can be a difference between the NRS requirement for assessment and the assessment needs of a particular participant.
- Alternative Assessments – Although only TABE and CASAS assessments may be used for performance funding, special populations, such as those adults with documented language barriers or disabilities may be assessed using additional or alternative methods such as:
  1. Power Path screening.
  2. TABE and CASAS oral assessments.



3. Aids such as magnification tools with written assessments.
4. The oral screening portion of the Form 20 ESL Appraisal for non-English speakers.
5. The oral portion of the TABE, Level L test for English speakers.

### **Pretest and Post-test State Standards**

Eighty percent (80%) of enrolled participants will be administered a pretest, and twenty-five (25%) of enrolled participants will be administered a post-test, using the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS).

### **Pretest Administration**

Appropriate pretests will be administered to each participant only after a thorough intake interview and orientation are conducted. Pretests may be administered during an orientation class if the orientation class is of sufficient duration and intensity. Otherwise, *pretests should be administered during the first 2-4 hours of attendance after the intake interview, or during the first two weeks of attendance, whichever is more appropriate.*

### **Post-test Administration**

Generally, appropriate posttests should be administered to participants after sufficient attendance (time on task) results in significant educational functioning improvement. Several factors may impact participants' readiness for post-testing: (1) frequency and intensity of attendance, (2) participants' ability to retain newly-acquired knowledge, (3) and participants' educational functioning level. The Department's research, using Missouri AEL learner assessment data from previous years, supports the following guidelines:

- Some participants who are engaged in GED instructional activities may advance to higher educational functioning levels after only a few hours of time-on-task.
- Some ESL participants, or English-speaking new readers, who enroll at the very lowest Educational Functioning Levels, may require 60-100 hours, or more, time-on-task prior to post-testing.
- Adult learners who begin their instructional activities at Educational Functioning Levels 4, 5, and 6 *should be administered post-tests after 20-30 hours of time-on-task, or four weeks of attendance, whichever is more appropriate.*
- Adult learners who begin their instructional activities at Educational Functioning Levels 1, 2, and 3 *should be administered post-tests after 60-100 hours of time-on-task or eight weeks of attendance, whichever is more appropriate.*

## **Section V. Information and Data Collection Basics and Guidelines**

This document reflects the Department's policy and procedures for reviewing and substantiating the quality of information and data it collects and reports. Missouri AEL service providers will adhere to guidelines and rules herein; however they may develop more detailed guidelines that are tailored to specific programmatic needs.

These guidelines consider information and data quality based on three factors: utility, objectivity, and integrity. These factors are intended to ensure that information the DESE and Missouri AEL service providers collect and disseminate are useful, accurate, reliable, unbiased, and secure. The DESE staff and Missouri AEL service provider personnel will treat quality as integral to the creation, collection, maintenance, and dissemination of information and data, and will review data and products before they are disseminated to ensure that they are consistent with these Guidelines.

### **Utility**

Utility refers to the usefulness of the information to its intended users. Utility is achieved by recognizing changing needs for information and data and by developing new products and services where appropriate. To maximize the utility of information and data, care must be taken to ensure that an external user of the information and data can clearly understand it and, where appropriate and practical, recreate the steps of the process involved in producing the information.

### **Objectivity**

Objectivity refers to the accuracy, reliability, and unbiased nature of information. It is achieved by using reliable information sources and appropriate techniques to prepare information products. Objectivity involves both the content and the presentation of the information. The content should be complete, with documentation of the source of any information used, and when appropriate, a description of the sources of any errors in the data that may affect the quality of the information product. The presentation of the information should be clear and in a proper context so that users can easily understand its meaning.

### **Integrity**

Integrity refers to the security, or protection, of information from unauthorized access or revision. Integrity ensures that the information is not compromised through corruption or falsification. The DESE and Missouri AEL service providers will strive to protect the information it collects, uses, and disseminates to the public from unauthorized disclosure, alteration, loss, or destruction. Statutory and administrative guidelines to protect the integrity of the DESE and Missouri AEL service provider information and data include the following:

- Privacy Act.

- Freedom of Information Act.
- OMB Circulars A-123, A-127, and A-130.
- Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
- Computer Security Act of 1987.
- Government Information Security Reform Act.
- National Education Statistics Act, as amended by the USA Patriot Act.

Under the Privacy Act, the Department and Missouri AEL service providers will safeguard personally identifiable information and data about individuals that it collects and maintains in a system of records that may include information and data that are collected under pledges of confidentiality.

Under the Computer Security Act of 1987, the DESE and Missouri AEL service providers will identify all computer systems that contain sensitive information and will implement security plans to protect these systems, to protect sensitive information against loss, misuse, disclosure or modification. In this context, sensitive information includes data covered under the Privacy Act and information that could affect the conduct of federal programs.

### **Categories of Information and Data**

*General Information* about Adult Education and Literacy activities includes fact sheets, or descriptions of programs and services and guidance related to eligibility and application for services or assistance. The Department and Missouri AEL service provider information and data products should be appropriate for the target audience. Each product should:

1. Clearly state the goals or purpose of the information product.
2. Include an unbiased presentation of the topic in question.
3. If applicable, draw upon peer-reviewed, scientific evidence-based information and data that is appropriately documented.
4. Clearly identify data sources, if applicable.
5. Document the reliability of the data, and acknowledge any or explicit errors in any data that is included.

*Statistical Data* are collections of non-administrative, special purpose activity data designed to satisfy information needs identified through internal review, state and federal legislative mandates, or input from data users other than the DESE or Missouri AEL service providers. The statistical data that the DESE requires of Missouri AEL service providers are to satisfy the requirements of the NRS and other identified needs for data. The DESE and Missouri AEL service provider data collection procedures should be clearly written, and should follow these guidelines:

1. In formulating a data collection plan, the goals of the plan should be clearly described.
2. The data to be collected should be clearly defined, using broadly understood concepts and definitions that are consistent with the Department data definition handbooks, policies, or other documents.
3. In designing the work, every effort should be made to minimize the amount of time required for Missouri AEL service providers and AEL participants.
4. The source of data should be reliable and verifiable.
5. Care should be taken to ensure the confidentiality of personally identifiable data, as required by law, during data collection, processing, and dissemination.
6. Data should be capable of being reproduced or replicated based on information included in the documentation, such as:
  - The source(s) of the information.
  - The date the information was current.
  - Any known limitations on the information.
  - The reason the information is provided.
  - Descriptions of any statistical techniques or mathematical operations applied to source data.
  - Identification of other sources of potentially corroborating or conflicting information.
7. Program records such as student folders, sign-in sheets, and electronic collections of data should be locally available for a period of five (5) years to support or verify all disseminated data collections.
8. Prior to dissemination, the data should be processed in a manner sufficient to ensure that the data are cleaned and edited for accuracy and reliability.
9. All data should be disseminated in a timely manner.
10. There should be established written procedures to correct any identified errors after dissemination.

## Section VI. Missouri AEL Service Provider Data Quality Activities

The National Reporting System requires a data collection system that documents personal data, demographic data, assessment data, and other attendance data for Missouri AEL learners. Missouri AEL service providers will develop and implement a written Data Collection Plan that, as a minimum, includes the following specific data collection procedures:

1. **Submission of Information and Data** – Teachers, or other designated individuals, at individual class sites will utilize *state approved, written standardized intake procedures and intake forms* to document participant data. Missouri AEL service providers will utilize only trained data entry personnel for data entry duties. Missouri AEL service providers will submit participant enrollment and assessment data to the Department at least quarterly. Only data submitted to the state agency on or before July 30 each program year will be used for the purpose of determining an AEL service provider's performance funding.
2. **Data Verification** – Missouri AEL service providers must develop written procedures or processes to verify the accuracy of NRS data. *Class site teachers* will review the intake data to assure that information and data are accurate and legible. The intake forms will be forwarded to the Missouri AEL service provider administrative center where information and data will be entered into the Missouri Adult Education and Literacy management information system (MIS). *Data entry personnel* will review the data at the time of entry for accuracy and completeness before the entry screens are saved. The Department will, as required, communicate with Missouri AEL service providers to verify the accuracy of NRS data. **NOTE:** *Each Missouri AEL service provider will develop and implement a written procedure to assure that each participant's SSN or tracking number is unique (see Data Dictionary definition of SSN and tracking numbers).*
3. **Data Certification** - At the end of each fiscal year, Missouri AEL service providers' data entry personnel will prepare a CD copy of the database that contains all participant data, and forward that CD to the Department along with a signed copy of the *Missouri Adult Education and Literacy Program Data Assurance Form* (Attachment).
4. **Data Error Checking Process** – Missouri AEL service providers must develop written procedures or processes for data error checking. As a minimum, the process must check the following:
  - Enrollment and Exit dates.
  - SSN or tracking number for completeness or duplication.
  - Date of Birth to assure that participant is at least 16 years of age at entry.
  - Completeness of all assessment data.
  - The presence and accuracy of all other information and data required by NRS.

5. **Goal Setting Procedure** – Missouri AEL service providers must develop and implement written procedures or processes for learners' goal setting. Class site teachers, or teacher aides, will take the following steps to assure accuracy of participant goals:
- Explain to each participant the necessity of appropriate goal identification.
  - Primary and Secondary goals should be affirmed and reported only after pretest assessments are completed and analyzed.
  - Both primary and secondary goals should be both challenging and practically achievable in the current program year.
  - If a participant's goals change, Missouri AEL service providers will inform the state office of the change.
  - Class site teachers should understand that a difference may exist between NRS goal identification and participants' total needs.

## Section VII: State Agency Data Quality Activities

1. **Data Error Checking** - The DESE will error check all information and data submitted by Missouri AEL service providers. The data collection system will check:
  - Enrollment and Exit dates.
  - SSN or tracking number for completeness or duplication.
  - Date of Birth to assure that participant is at least 16 years of age at entry.
  - Completeness of all assessment data.
  - The presence and accuracy of all other information and data required by NRS.
2. **State Feedback to Local Programs** – To ensure the accuracy and quality of NRS data, feedback in the form of reports, related to participant enrollment, assessment, and exit, will be disseminated at least monthly in a “user-friendly” format to each Missouri AEL service provider.
3. **Follow-up and Data Matching procedure** – The DESE personnel will conduct data matching procedures to obtain participant Core Outcomes Measure # 4, *Receipt of a Secondary School Diploma or GED*. Data files will be prepared for data matching related to Core Outcome Measure #2, *Entered Employment*, Core Outcome Measure # 3, *Retained Employment*, and Core Measure # 5, *Placement in Postsecondary Education or Training*. The following steps will be taken:
  - All Missouri AEL service provider participants who were enrolled and retained during the program year will be identified (excluding Missouri Department of Corrections inmates and other classes of participants identified as ineligible).
  - Consideration will be given to participants’ primary and secondary goals and/or educational functioning level at entry when aggregating files for data matching.
  - A Social Security Number and a class-code that identifies a specific Missouri AEL service provider will identify each participant’s records. Other identifiers will be used to specify goals and employment status at entry.
  - Each file for data matching will be labeled appropriately and submitted to the contractor (University of Missouri, Columbia, Department of Economics) who will conduct data matching operations using Missouri and surrounding states’ wage data bases, Higher Education databases, and Vocational Training databases.
  - All data-matching files created by the DESE personnel will be archived.

- The contractor selected to conduct data matching will develop and present a report that identifies the appropriate statistics required by NRS.
4. **Annual Data Analysis and Studies** – The DESE AEL staff will annually conduct analysis activities using statewide NRS information and data disaggregated by Missouri AEL service provider, individual class site, and other selected categories. Significant findings of analyses may be used to inform AEL funding decisions, policy, teacher training, staff development, and purchase of instructional supplies and equipment.
  5. **Annual Performance Report** - DESE will develop and submit the Annual Performance Report, including the Financial and Statistical Tables and narrative, to the U.S. Department on or before December 31 each year.
  6. **Training and Technical Assistance** – The DESE will develop training each year for Missouri AEL service provider data entry personnel, teachers, and administrators related to: (1) NRS information and data collection, (2) using information and data for program management, and (3) using information and data to develop and implement continuous improvement activities.

The Missouri Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center personnel and Department AEL staff will develop presentations related to NRS Data Collection requirements for:

- Beginning Teacher Workshops (BTW).
  - Intermediate Teacher Workshops (ITW).
  - Experienced Teacher Workshops (ETW).
  - Local in-service presentations.
  - Other local or regional workshops.
7. **Third Party Review** – The Department will designate an impartial third party, who will create a written report, to review Missouri Adult Education and Literacy data and performance each Fiscal year.



## Section VIII. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Missouri AEL service providers will develop and implement CQI initiatives to improve information and data quality. An effective Continuous Quality Improvement should include three primary processes, or functions: (1) Quality Planning, (2) Quality Control, and (3) Quality Improvement.

*Quality Planning* includes the activities of establishing quality goals and performance benchmarks, or standards, and developing the strategies, or processes, to meet those goals and standards. Quality planning is the key ingredient in achieving quality. Table 1 summarizes the individual elements of the planning process.

**Table 1: Elements of the Planning Process**

1. Identify and describe customers, partners, and /or types of adult learners.
2. Determine needs of customers, partners, and/or types of adult learners.
3. Establish quality goals, benchmarks, or standards.
4. Develop appropriate curriculum, teaching methodologies, and assessment strategies.
5. Develop process (training) required to deliver required services.
6. Develop a system of information/data collection, reporting, and analysis (controls).
7. Implement the process control system.

There are three distinct steps in the *Quality Control* process: (1) determine actual performance, (2) compare actual performance to quality standards, or benchmarks, and (3) take necessary action to correct the process (corrective action in this process should create long-term improvement – more than stop-gap remedies). When performance does not meet standards, corrective action must be developed as a result of investigation and problem-solving methodologies. All members of an organization must have knowledge of, and a deep understanding of, processes (curriculum, instructional strategies, assessment, etc.), and at the same time, be skilled analysts and problem solvers.

The third process, *Quality Improvement*, is the process that raises quality to unprecedented levels. The improvement process includes five steps, shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Steps of the Quality Improvement process**

1. Identify and target specific needs for improvement.
2. Establish the infrastructure required for annual quality improvement (incentives, training, functional and cross-functional teams, etc.).
3. Give teams clear responsibility for creating and implementing solutions to problems and effecting improvement.
4. Provide resources, required training, and motivation to succeed.
5. Develop and implement controls to maintain quality gains.